

A Drummer's Dream



by Kimberly Jackson
illustrated by Ethan Long

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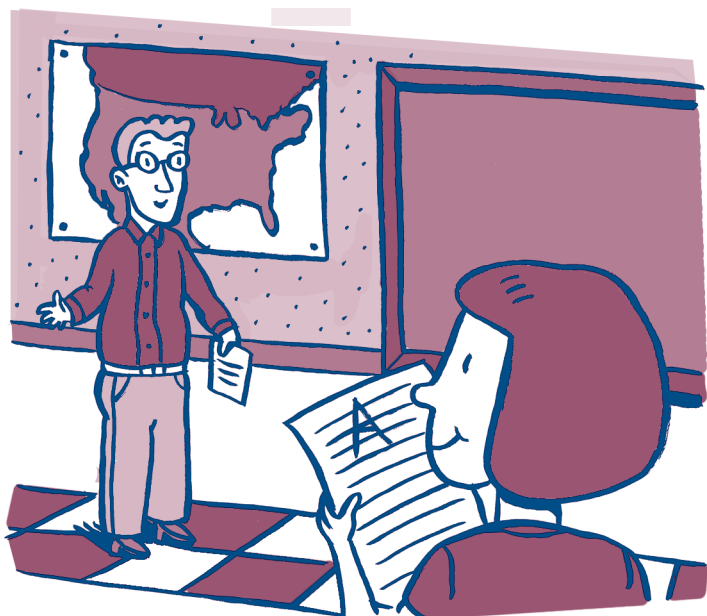
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Brittany handed in her homework a day early. The ten-page paper had been easy for her to write. The words just seemed to flow onto the paper. It was easy because the assignment was to answer the question, "What is your dream occupation?"

Ever since she was six years old, there has been no doubt in Brittany's mind that she wants to be a drummer. She's been to lots of concerts, but she especially enjoyed the concert by the Cruise Controls, her favorite band. The drummer, Ivan Steele, is definitely her favorite musician.





When Brittany's homeroom teacher, Mr. Clover, returned the papers a few days later, Brittany looked at the grade and beamed with pride at the big, red A. "Yes!" she said to herself.

"If anyone has any questions about the grading, please see me after class. By tomorrow afternoon, these grades will be submitted to the office, and there's no way that I can change them after that," Mr. Clover explained.

That evening, Brittany waited for her dad to get home from his job at the refinery. She wanted to show her paper to both her parents at the same time.



Her mom came home from her part-time job at about 2:30, but her dad usually didn't walk in the door until at least 6:00. Today, waiting for him to come home seemed like forever.

The minute her dad got home, Brittany pulled her paper out of her backpack to show her parents the wonderful grade she received. They, too, were delighted.

“I think this calls for a celebration!” her dad exclaimed. “How about going out to dinner tonight? You pick the place, Brittany.”

“Oh, that’ll be great!” Brittany said. “Let’s go to Trader Mick’s. I love the view from their dining room, and the food’s delicious.”

That evening, Brittany and her parents had a wonderful time at Trader Mick’s. They talked about her paper and about her plans for the future. Both her parents encouraged Brittany’s interest in drumming.



“Don’t forget, Brittany, that we have a date to go to Darlene’s recording studio tomorrow. I’ll pick you up right after school, and we can go from there. Also, don’t forget to take your drumsticks to school in your backpack tomorrow. I want you to play for Darlene while we’re there.”



“Are you kidding? There’s no way I’d forget, Mom. I wish we could go right now!”

“Well, right now it’s time for dessert,” said her dad. “How about your favorite, a big hot-fudge sundae?”

“That’ll be super!” said Brittany.

The next day after school, Brittany's mom picked her up at 3:15. Brittany could hardly wait to get to the studio. She already had her drumsticks out and was holding them on her lap. On their way to the studio, Brittany said, "Darlene has to be the luckiest person alive, Mom. She knows Ivan Steele!"

"Well, they're both in the music business. Ivan Steele has used Darlene's studio to make some of his recordings."





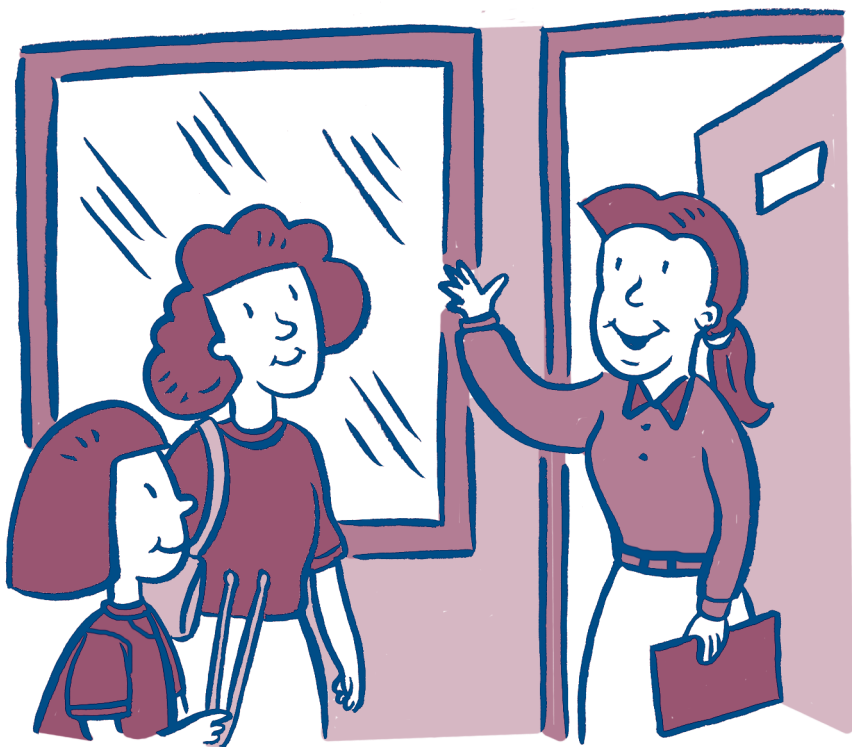
Before long, they got to the studio. As they walked in, Brittany couldn't stop looking at all the photographs on the wall. Darlene had photographs of all of the musicians who had recorded there. Brittany kept thinking to herself, "One day my picture's going to be hanging there on the wall, right next to Ivan's."

A young man in the front office greeted them. He said, "Hi. You must be Joan Levin and Brittany. We've been expecting you. I'm Greg, Darlene's assistant. Why don't you sit down? Darlene will be with you shortly."

A few minutes later, Darlene poked her head around a partition to see who was there. "I'm glad you made it! Come on in. Hi, Brittany. I can't wait to hear how you've been progressing on the drums."

As they talked, they walked through the studio. When they got to the sound booth, Darlene said, "Why don't you play something for me?"

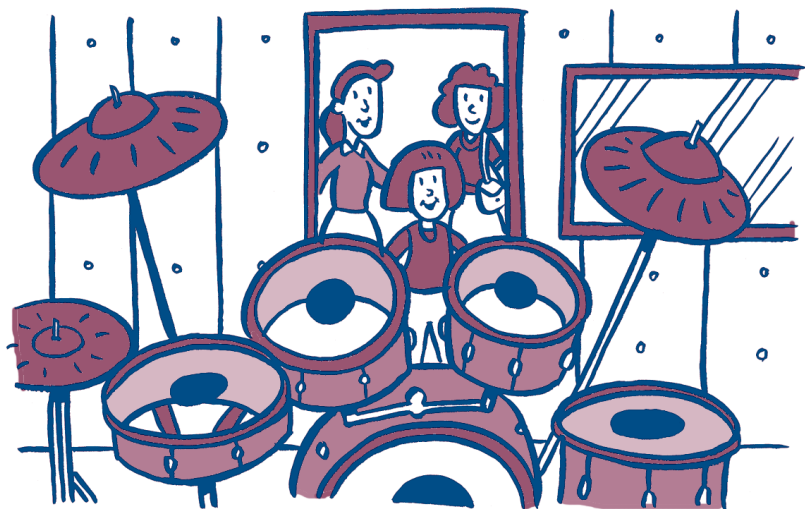
"Sure, but won't it bother Greg while he's working?" asked Brittany.

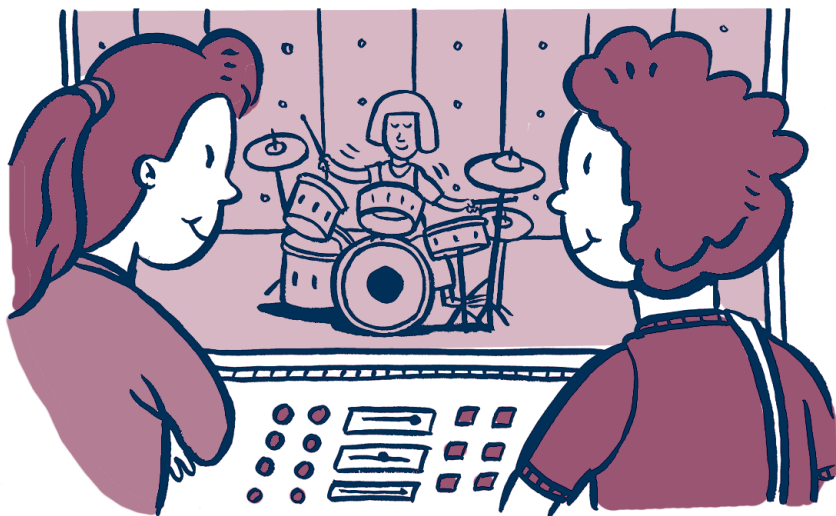


“No. This room is insulated. Do you see all the stuff on the walls and ceiling? That works to muffle the sound. You can be as loud as you want, and the neighbors never complain. So go ahead, play as loud as you want. Be crazy!” Darlene said.

“Cool! Thanks. I brought my own drumsticks.”

Brittany sat down behind the drums and took a deep breath. She knew that this moment could affect the rest of her life. If she played well, Darlene might be willing to help her get a recording contract some day.





While Brittany was playing for Darlene, Darlene gave Brittany's mom a surprised look and a thumbs-up sign.

"Wow, Joan, you weren't kidding. Brittany's gotten even better. How long has she been playing? I can't keep track."

"About three years now. Her dream is to be a famous drummer some day."

After Brittany had finished playing, Darlene told her how impressed she was. “You just keep getting better and better, Brittany. Maybe in a few years, when you’re older and playing in a band, you could give me a tape. I could get it submitted to some people in the music business that I know, and we’ll go from there. Until then, keep practicing. I think you’re really talented.”

“Wow! Really?” exclaimed Brittany. “That would be the coolest! So, Darlene, what’s Ivan Steele like? Mom told me he used to record here in this studio.”





“That’s right. He’s become so popular that he practically prowls around the city in a disguise to avoid the attention he attracts from his devoted fans. It’s sad because his life is sort of isolated from the outside world,” Darlene said.

“Yes. I guess there are disadvantages, as well as advantages, to being rich and famous. Brittany, I hope you never get so famous that you have to wear a disguise. Wouldn’t that be terrible?” said her mom.

"I don't think you'll have to worry about that, Mom," Brittany said with a chuckle.

"Thank you so much, Darlene. We appreciate your taking time out of your busy schedule to meet with us. We should be going now. Thanks again for a great time," Brittany's mom said.

"Yes, we'd better hurry. We have to pick up Dad at work today."

"Where is Tom working now?" Darlene asked.

"He still works at the refinery, right outside of the city."

Brittany put out her hand to shake Darlene's. "Thank you so much, Darlene."



“Remember what I said about the tape. I’ll see you again soon. So long, Joan. So long, Brittany.” Darlene waved good-bye as Brittany and her mom walked toward their car.

Brittany and her mom picked up her dad. While they were driving home, Brittany said, “Dad, you know Ivan Steele from the band called the Cruise Controls? Darlene told me that he is so popular that he has to prowl around the city in a disguise to avoid attracting too much attention. Sad, huh?”

“Sure is, dear,” said her dad. “But attention goes along with fame.”



“Well, I have a different plan. In the future, when I’m performing, I’ll wear a disguise on stage, so that I won’t be recognized when I’m out in real life. And that reminds me—I’m going to have to start practicing a lot more from now on. I was thinking...”
Brittany paused a moment for effect.

Then she continued, “What do you think about making half of the living room into a studio? We could put up a partition and get some of that foam stuff like Darlene had to muffle the noise. Then I can practice whenever I want to without worrying about the noise I’m making. Wouldn’t that be cool?”

Brittany’s parents exchanged a look that seemed to suggest that it wouldn’t be all that cool. “We’ll see,” is all they said.



Think and Respond

- 1 What events lead to Brittany's celebration dinner at Trader Mick's?
- 2 How are you similar to or different from Brittany?
- 3 What do you think will happen to Brittany?
- 4 Why do you think that Darlene believes in Brittany?
- 5 How is this story similar to another story you've read? How is it different?
- 6 How would you feel if you were as popular as Ivan Steele? Explain your answer.

LANGUAGE
ARTS



Your Dream Write a paragraph answering the same question Brittany answered: What is your dream occupation? Share your writing with a partner or a small group.



School-Home Connection Tell a family member about this story. Then ask that person what his or her dream occupation is.